

Welcome back to a new year! Can you believe 2005 has already come to an end? I sure can't. I've had so much fun this year, meeting new people, hanging out with chapter members, or just doing the state officer stuff! This January I attended the International Leadership Seminar for State Officers and traveled to Spain and Portugal. That was something I had never imagined myself doing. I kept a journal of my adventure. So here it is, fresh from Spain and Portugal!

Wednesday, January 4th, 2006

Kristina, Dan, and I arrived at the Marriot in Newark, New Jersey around 5 pm. Dan and I met our roommates Jake and Bryan from Illinois. We would be spending a night with them in Newark as we prepared for our flight over the Atlantic Ocean tomorrow night. Around 6:00, we were called to dinner. This was a time to meet with fellow state officers attending the trip and our trip Chaperones. There are 51 state officers in attendance and five chaperones; Jill Casten, National FFA Collegiate Services, Tina Paris, National FFA Global Management, Mr. Bledsoe National FFA Leadership and Educational Program Team Leader, Dr. Brown, Missouri FFA Executive Secretary, and



Ms. Johnson, Nebraska FFA Executive Director. At 7:00, we heard from Larry Groce, a representative from the United States Grains Foundation. This organization services the US grain industries, encompassing sorghum, corn, wheat, soybeans, and other grain crops. They have offices all over the world, targeting future markets, not already established ones. After our brief presentation, the rest of the night was on our own. I went down to the restaurant with Hallie and Nicole, both from Delaware, and Jake from Illinois. After we returned, I watched the rest of the Rose Bowl game before settling in for the night. I am beginning to feel slightly nervous about this trip. This is the first time I have flown over the Atlantic Ocean and out of the United States, the place I've called home for 19 years! It's going to be a long flight, nearly 6 hours, and, on top of that, a six-hour time difference. Once I'm on the plane and in the air, I'll feel better! Over and Out!

Thursday, January 5th, 2006

I woke up around 7:45 for a continental breakfast in the hotel conference room. At 9:00, we began our first meeting for the day. Ms. Paris spoke to us about some of the logistics for our trip, including the updated itinerary and some general travel information. We were then given our FFA global button up shirts and our backpacks. Pretty Snazzy! After a short break, we wrote thank you letters to the sponsors for the National FFA Global Program. I still have many thank yous to write to all of my sponsors back home. We were then given a short break to pack up all our things. This was followed by lunch and another meeting about the perceptions that other countries hold of the United States of America and its citizens. We also met the members of our groups. I am in group 5 with Mr. Bledsoe from the National FFA. After this short meeting, we had free time to prepare to arrive at Newark International Airport. When we boarded the bus and arrived at the airport, I helped unload some of the bags from the bus. We then checked in and went through the lines of security. Before leaving, I had some turn some American money into Euros; we all need some money to spend in Europe! A group of us grabbed something to eat and we were in the air to Madrid, Spain.



Friday, January 6th, 2006

We arrived in Madrid around 9:15 local time (around 3:15am in New Jersey). Everyone retrieved their luggage and passed through Spanish customs. They stamped my passport for the first time! As we walked out of the airport, we met up with our Agro-Tour guides Trini and Eduardo. I was on Eduardo's bus. Eduardo was born and raised in Belgium before moving to Spain 25 years ago. We took a brief ride into the heart of Madrid, the Spanish Capitol. We explored Madrid for a few hours



before checking into our hotel. We drove to the Prato Museum, and the Botanical Gardens developed by King Phillip the III. We then visited a huge park, slightly smaller than central park in New York City but comparable in size. I enjoyed this walk very much, due to the expansiveness of the park and the beauty. I was amazed with the memorial to the Madrid Subway bombings a few years ago. They used cypress, a plant with high importance in Spanish culture, and olive branches, representing peace. In order to get to the top, you had to climb a gentle incline. On top, you had a beautiful view of the park.

I enjoyed seeing a lot of the same plants in the gardens. They seem to use a lot of Southern Magnolia, Leyland Cypress, and Buttonwood (American plane for some). There was a lot of Lebanon Cedar, along with some very unique pine trees. After this, we traveled to the hotel for lunch and to check in. We were served a delicious pasta dish, turkey, and dessert. Everyone then took their luggage to their rooms and after a short break we returned to our tours. We visited numerous city sites with our local tour guides, such as the monument to Christopher Columbus and the Italian, French, and American embassies. We even saw the Spanish Bull Fighting arena. It was the wrong time of the year for bull fights though. Once we completed our tour, we went back to the hotel for a short period.

Dinner was on our own so I decided to go out with some of the State Officers from Nebraska and Minnesota. We were unlucky in our findings, so some of us returned to the hotel. I then went out with Brady from Florida, Christina and Hallie from Delaware, and Dillon from Nebraska. This was an experience! We had little or no idea what we were ordering off the menu! Hallie and Christina ordered randomly, getting a ham sandwich and cheese sandwich. Today was Three Kings Day in Spain, a time when the three kings, similar to our Santa Claus, bring children gifts. The restaurant had a specialty for that holiday, Kings Cake. We each tried some of it. It was delicious! It was great to be here and experience this holiday. After this eventful evening, it was time to go to bed. I am extremely tired due to the time difference.



Saturday, January 7th, 2006

We started the day with a breakfast buffet at the hotel around 8:00. It was very delicious and unique compared to our breakfast in America. We then departed the hotel for a tour of the city of Toledo, a place known for its rich history and religious buildings. We boarded the bus and drove for nearly an hour before arriving in the City. During our trip there, Eduardo gave us some hints about what to order in Spanish restaurants. He also discussed the lay of the land and the type of agriculture that can be done because of it. The climate seems very similar to New Jersey, with the frosts ending in the first weeks of May and coming again in October. Except the winter temperatures stays around 32 degrees Fahrenheit. As we drove into Toledo, we were given a breath-taking view of the city. It was amazing. Toledo was settled in the first century on the banks of the river, which allowed for safety and industrialization, such as milling. While in Toledo,



we had a wonderful tour guide named Carlos. We toured the old city and saw various historical buildings. It was amazing and quite unique. It's hard to imagine this city is older than the United States of America. I've seen many pictures of cities like this on the televisions, but its another thing to see it first hand. One thing that amazed me was the streets were extremely narrow, yet that never seem to phase the cars. They still drove like 50 miles per hour. We had barely enough room to get to the side when a car was coming through. Our group toured the Jewish Synagogue, one of three left in the city of Toledo. We then moved to see the Greco, a world famous painting found in a Catholic Church. Our next stop was the National Cathedral, which was outstanding. After this, we had free time to explore the city. I traveled with



Erin from Florida and Jake from Washington to a small restaurant in the city. We all ordered delicious chicken. We all boarded the bus and traveled to a small gold threading shop in the city. This makes gold items more affordable. There was a man working on a few pieces of jewelry. I decided to live a little and buy a sword! It wasn't sharp, so it's not dangerous, but it's a great souvenir! It was then time to head back to Madrid. When we arrived back into the City, we were able to go shopping. It was extremely crowded in the city; probably it was the day after Three Kings Day. When we walked into El Corte Ingles, a local department store similar to JC Penny's or Sears, the floor was even moving with the traffic. We caught a taxicab back to the hotel for dinner. I didn't really enjoy dinner. The dinner was fish, but it still had a head and a tail. After dinner, a group of us went out to the city for some coffee. It took a while to find a place. I have to say coffee is a lot stronger than American coffee. After completing our adventure, we returned to the hotel to play a quick name game, an idea of Christian from Minnesota. The game went on for nearly 2 hours! Once that was over, I went to bed.

Sunday, January 8th, 2006

Finally, I got the chance to sleep in. I'm still trying to adapt to the different time zones. After waking up around 8:45, I showered and headed to the buffet breakfast. When I arrived at breakfast, hardly anyone was there. Eventually a couple others began to filter in. Many of the people had already gone out into the city. I caught up with Nicole from Delaware and Kaitlyn from Kansas to check out the Prado and the botanical gardens. We flagged down a taxi near the hotel and we were on our way. We spent about an hour and half at the museum viewing the amazing statues and paintings. There were so many to see. At around 11:15, we decided to view the botanical gardens. It cost 2 euros for each of us to enter but it was worth it. Even though it was winter, the gardens were still beautiful. I knew from the scent when we entered that they used a lot of boxwood. If you've ever been around boxwoods, you know what I mean. We explored the shrub gardens, the vegetable area, and the various sections of trees. I couldn't believe the sizes of some of the plants in the gardens. Around 12:15, we decided it was time to travel back to the hotel. We again flagged down a cab and we were on our way to the hotel. Upon returning, we grabbed our luggage and boarded the bus for our train ride to Malaga. We then drove to the Madrid train station and prepared for our four-hour trip to Malaga. While we waited for our train to arrive, a group of us "guarded" the luggage while the rest went out for food. Some people brought food back to Dr. Brown, Miles from North Carolina, Ryan from Nebraska, and me as we stood guard. Finally, we all went through security



without a problem. This was my first time on a train; we don't get that type of thing in South Jersey! It was a great way to experience the countryside and receive a first hand view of Spain. The scenery was beautiful, as we saw fields and long stretches of olive groves and mountain ranges. Even though it was slightly crowded, it was still amazing to see such a sight. We arrived at the train station in Malaga, boarded our new bright yellow buses, and checked in at the Hotel Cervantes. After dinner a group of us went down to explore the city. We even walked down to the Mediterranean Sea. Some of our group even went in! I went in up to my ankles so that I could say I went into the Mediterranean. We then walked backed to our hotel.

Monday, January 9th, 2006

We began the day bright and early. I packed all of my stuff back up and went down to the buffet breakfast. Everyone loaded up the bus for our next stop, Granada! The trip to our first visit, the sugar mill and aquaculture facility was awesome. It was a bright and sunny day along the Mediterranean coast of Granada! During our trip, we even saw some ancient



Roman ruins. We arrived at the Sugar Mill and the fish farm, the site of our first technical visit. Eduardo explained that the mill was from 1885 and is the last remaining facility in Europe. They bring the local sugar cane, raised in the low areas of the coast, to the mill for processing. The plant uses coal



to power the press water from the fibrous parts. They can get approximately 11 ½ to 13 ½ percent sugar from the total weight of the plant. The products made from the sugar are molasses, sugar honey, and table sugar. The sugar master decides when the sugar will set from the other products. The plant also uses their sugar to make a type of rum, which is sometimes made from imported sugar. Eduardo then pointed out a castle on the hill, built by the moors and the setting for one of Washington Irving's books. We then moved

to the fishery, where they utilize the steam energy not needed by the sugar mill. There are thirty, 50, 000 liter tanks at this facility. Each tank holds approximately 25, 000 fish per tank, mainly sea bass. The fish are raised from hatchlings to fingerlings. All of the tanks are self-cleaning and computer controlled for greater control. The computer controls oxygen concentration and other essential processes. Feeding is done every twelve hours, once by machine and once by hand. Once the fish reach finger length, they are transferred from the tanks to holding areas in the Sea. They are transferred through gravitational pull, putting less stress on the fish because they themselves swim to the tanks. The fishery uses no unnatural processes. Even the water used in the tanks is taken from the sea. We then traveled into town for lunch. Everyone had some free time to explore the beach and some time for quick pictures. We had an excellent lunch at a local restaurant. At 3:00, we were on our way to a local cooperative, composed of 14 full owners and 200 co-owners. We toured the packing facility and the custard apple orchards. The facility reminded me of some places in New Jersey. Employees were packing cucumbers, avocados, and cherry tomatoes. They sort for color, quality, and size. We then boarded the bus and set off for the custard apples. Custard apples are native to Peru and were brought over by Spanish explorers. They were interesting because the plants still follow Peru's seasons, due to the fact Peru is opposite to Spain. In April during Spain's spring, the custard apples loose their leaves and gain their leaves in late September and early October. All pollination is done by hand because the custard apple is not correctly pollinated by native insects. They remove some of the flowers, dry them, and then sift out the pollen. For irrigation, they use a system of various canals cut inside and outside the orchard. The canals are all dug by donkey-pulled plows. We had the chance to see the inside of a custard apple, which smelled like a combination of pear and pineapple. These fruits cannot be shipped to the United States because they don't hold up well during shipping. Ninety percent of the fruit stays in Spain; the others are shipped inside Europe. We finished the tour and dropped Miguel, the engineer in charge of the facility, back at the cooperative. We then were on our way to Granada. On the way, we passed the construction of a new dam, which Eduardo explained that it was being built by the European Union funds. Traveling farther, we saw a couple of wind turbines. They were awesome to see. Arriving in Granada was hectic due to the large amounts of construction going on. The sidewalks were barely wide enough for two people to pass through. After checking into the hotel, we stepped out for a quick bite to eat. We returned and it was time for bed!



Tuesday, January 10th, 2006

The day started as usual with breakfast at the hotel. We then boarded the bus and headed for our first stop at an Olive Oil Cooperative. When we arrived, our first stop was the olive museum. The



making of olive oil has its origins in the ancient Roman times. In ancient times, the process began with the grinding of olives with large stone wheel powered by mules or oxen. We were then showed the press. The guide also shared with us that there are currently 25, 000 members of this cooperative. Olive trees thrive in the Mediterranean region due to its climate. The guide

even joked that the olive trees in California are not even used for their olives, just their decorative purposes. One interesting fact was a tree placed in front of the building was over 300 years old! It looked so young! After a brief tour, we boarded the bus for the olive oil plant. The quality of olives is optimized when they are pressed directly after harvest. This was almost impossible in the Roman times, but it is easily done in modern times. The olives first arrive and are dumped in the hopper for cleaning and separation from the leaves and stems. The customers are only paid for the weight of the olives, not for the other material. The olives then move on to the next process where they are prepared for olive oil. We saw much of the equipment. The plant also sorts for acidity in the olives, for olives high in acid do not make good olive oil. We then viewed the storage facility where approximately 650,000 liters are stored. Then we moved outside where some of the customers were dropping off their freshly picked olives. One interesting fact we learned was the green table olives are actually unripe and must be soaked in a brine solution to be edible, yet black olives are ripe and need nothing to make them edible. We finished the tour by visiting the gift shop, where mostly everyone bought a bottle or tin of fresh oil made at the facility. Our next stop was a quick lunch and then a tour of the Alhambra, an ancient castle dating back to Arabic times in Spain. We had a local tour guide to take us through this amazing facility. The palace was built by the Arabs and further expanded upon by the Christians. The architecture was beautiful and wonderfully done for the time period. There were many decorative elements and fountains. The views were amazing. We then moved into the palace gardens. The gardens are not original, for they were made more attractive to local tourists. After the completion of our tour, we boarded the bus and were on our way back to the hotel. A group of us decided to go shopping in our free time. After some guidance from Trini, Christian and I were on our way out into the city. We were even able to find a custard apple on our tour. Christian bought one and we took it back to the hotel. We eventually called a taxi because we had no idea where we had ended up. We arrived in time for our buffet dinner before traveling to the Flamenco show. The show was held in a cave house, a house built into the earth. Eduardo explained that this is very common in this city. The dancing and the singing was very interesting. It would have been better if I could speak Spanish. Overall, I enjoyed the experience, for it was something new and interesting. When we got back to the hotel, it was time for bed. What an exciting day!



Wednesday, January 11th, 2006

We began the day bright and early at 7:45 am and prepared for our 2 hour and 20 minute drive to the Yeuguada, a Spanish military horse facility. We arrived at the farm and met the gentlemen in charge of this military institution. Our first stop was the full-bred donkeys of three key breeds, essential to this area. Some of these animals are some of the last in Spain. We then viewed the mares, one with a foal following close behind. They then explained that this farm does not rely heavily on government funds because they currently own and farm 1200 hectares. These are utilized for the production of commercial crops. We then met with the head veterinarian at the Yeuguada. He explained the artificial insemination process utilized by the farm. This is key to preserving the breeds because they can select for their ideal traits. Following our guide, we moved to the farmhouse. As we entered, there were tons of medals and awards, all won by the horses at the farm. They explained that this house was part of an estate and was the place that the landowner would have lived. After that, we traveled farther down the road to visit another Yeuguada farm where they house 76 animals, including horses and donkeys. These included Anglo, Arabic, and Spanish horse varieties. We first viewed the one-year-old horses and got the opportunity to see them release the young horses from their holding pens to the open pasture. They were definitely excited to run. The gentlemen in



charge of the tour told us that the horses are kept together, male and female, until one year. They then separate them. Some of the horses will be utilized for breeding and other will be used for show. It can take anywhere from 3-5 or more years of training. In fact, the training will never end and will continue through their lifetime. After presenting gifts of appreciation, we left for lunch. Lunch was delicious. Once we finished our meal, we were on our way to the Sunaran Cooperative. This cooperative processes nearly 3.5 kilos of oranges and is made up of 100 farmers and 1200 hectares. We were able to view the entire packaging process from the arrival on the trucks to the packaging and storage. The cooperative has a special cold-storage unit for when they can't pick in the field due to heavy rains. When ready, the oranges are inspected visually, washed and dried by hot air, and then inspected under a ultra-violet light. Finally, the oranges are bagged, packing in boxes, stacked on pallets, and ready for shipping. We then continued our tour in the orange grove of a local farmer, having 65 hectares. Each hectare can produce nearly 65,000 kilos of oranges. This translates to roughly 300 kilos per tree. Each row is individually watered through drip irrigation. Oranges are picked by hand to optimize quality. There were a few varieties of oranges used by this farm. They harvest from September to April. The oranges do not produce during the intense summer heat. Navels produce first, and are picked unripe but then ripened with light. We had the chance to pick Sunlustiana, a variety only available in Spain. In addition, there were Valencia oranges. Plants are placed in diagonal rows to optimize light and productivity. An orange plant takes five years to reach maturity. In two more years, they have reached full maturity. I noticed that the soil in Spain is a lot different from the sandy Cumberland County soil. It seems a deeper red and more like clay. After finishing up, we were on our way to Seville. We arrived around 8:00 pm, checked in to our hotel, and we had a quick dinner. A group of us traveled around the town to take in the local flavor and see some of the local sites. We returned around 10:30, right in time for bed.



Thursday, January 12, 2006

The day started as usual with packing and a buffet breakfast. We then loaded the bus and took a short drive to the headquarters of all the cooperatives in the Andalucía region, located in Seville. There are currently 350, 000 farmers involved in the cooperatives in this region. These farmers represent many different industries, including horticulture, meat, animal husbandry, olive oil, citrus and

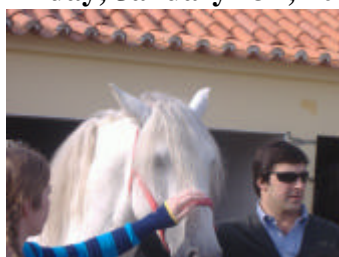


vegetables. Spanish farmers are encouraged to participate in cooperatives, which gives them a competitive edge in the world market. About 60-70% of all farmers in Andalucía participate in a cooperative. This collaboration between cooperatives seems very similar to the Farm Bureau, working and lobbying in the government. They are also certified by the Ministry of Education to give courses to become certified workers. Each agricultural worker must be certified in Spain. This education process offered by the cooperative makes it much easier for the cooperative members. It gives them discounts for telephone, electricity, and high speed internet. They can save the farmers nearly 20%. We said our goodbyes and presented our gifts. On our travels through Seville, we were able to see the sights of the city. These included the World Exposition held in 1992, and the sight where Seville had hoped to host the Olympics. We were then on the way to Portugal. Here will be slightly closer to home, for there is only a five-hour time difference. On the roads to Portugal, we saw tons of forested, fenced in land. Eduardo explained that these are pig farms. Pigs are fed acorns, which makes them high quality. Sheep and cows are raised this way as well. Pigs need roughly 10,000 m³ on a good year and 20, 000 m³ on a bad year. Many of the fields had a lot of Cork Oak, Stone Oak, and Evergreen Oak. The cork oak is used for cork. They simply shave off the bark exposing a bright red layer. After stopping for lunch that gave us a taste of the native food, we were on our way to Portugal again. You could definitely see a change in the landscape as we entered into Portugal. Our last stop for the day was at the Portuguese Winery.

This vineyard/winery was started in 1297, and operated fully until 1974 when the Portuguese Revolution occurred. It then became property of the state and was divided among citizens. It was later returned in 1979. They currently own 600 hectares used for grape production. Almost all the grapes are picked by hand. We saw the entire production from start to finish. Some of the more expensive wines are still pressed by foot. We were given a tour of the fermentation towers, the bottling plants, and the oak barrels, which are made from American and French oak. Depending on the variety of wine, it stays in the barrels anywhere from 6-18 months. It is then bottled and packaged for sale. They produce nearly 6 million liters and ship to nearly 28 countries. As we exited, we noticed that they had a rose bush at the end of every row of the vineyard. This is a French tradition used to beautify the vineyard. We finished our tour and began our ride to Evora, and old Roman city. We had a quick meal and it was time for bed.



Friday, January 13th, 2006



The day started as usual with a quick breakfast and packing up for the final time. When we arrive at our next hotel, we will be there for four days. We departed the hotel in Evora around 9:30 and began our drive to Danone farm; commonly known as Dannon in the United States. We finally arrived around 11:50 on the private road to the farm. We met with Francisco, our guide for the tours. It was interesting because he actually spoke little English. He showed us some of the farm's famous Lusitanian horses, commonly used for riding and leisure horses. This farm has become part of Portugal's state farms. It is composed of 20,000 hectares. We passed two fields composed of 2000 hectares of rice. They raise rice due to its prime location between two rivers. The water is brought from a dam located above the farm. They plow the fields, place it under 15 cm of water and then sow the rice by airplane. Fertilizing and spraying are also done by plane. Every 2 ½ hectares produces 6 tons of rice. This company exports its own products, having its own brand name. We then went to view the cattle. There are currently 4000 total head, and 1200 reproductive females. They have 10 people who work as cowboys. All of the cattle are identified through electronic means. On this farm, they raise four breeds, two foreign and 2 native Portuguese. The French breeds produce more meat but need more water, something not always found in this area. The native Portuguese produced less meat but need less water. Driving back, we passed pine used for resin production, wood, and for salt-water products. For example, because of the resistance to decay this product has, it is used to coat boats. These trees were used to build the Portuguese sailing ships, used to explore the new regions. It was also good to see acres of alfalfa and corn. We finally arrived at lunch and were treated to an excellent meal. We said our goodbyes to Francisco, and began our trip to the city of Lisbon in Portugal. The city is very busy, and many of the people speak English. We went out after we arrived to look for some gifts and returned around 7:00 for dinner. We finished up and began a night of relaxation.



Saturday, January 14th, 2006

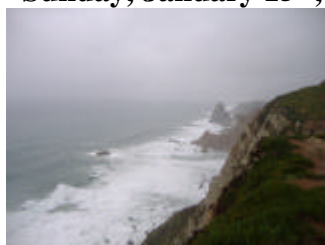


The day started as usual with breakfast, but this time no packing. We're actually in Lisbon for the remainder of the trip. We had to travel 120 kilometers to our first visit of the day, a Portuguese research farm. On the way, we were able to view some of Portugal's orchards and some interesting sites. We saw many wind generators, placed on top of high mountains. They are placed all over Spain and Portugal, according to Eduardo. We continued our trip to the research farm, where we met with

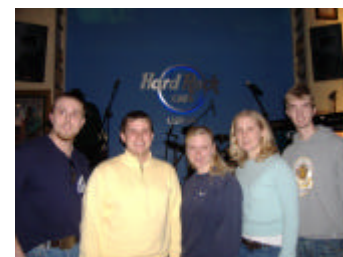
Maria, a scientist at the farm. This farm is similar to the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service we have in New Jersey. This farm researches pears, apples, walnuts, and kumquats. They are particularly interested in the Rosh pears, a variety very famous in Portugal. At the farm, they research graft heights, generally around 20 cm, and bacterial infections. We also viewed gala apples, part of the set they are testing. The farm is 10 hectares and they have another that is around 15 hectares where they test walnuts and figs. On our tour, we saw a plot of Loring and Redhaven peaches, varieties common to New Jersey. The kumquat is native to Japan, but is researched extensively at this farm because many are grown in the southern region of Portugal. This farm is funded by the government but supplements that funding through the sale of apples from a designated section of the farms. We thanked Maria for her time and presented her with a gift of appreciation. Everyone boarded the bus and headed back to Lisbon. Once we arrived, we met with our local tour guides who showed us the city. We visited a variety of sites, including a cathedral, various monuments dedicated to Portugal's exploration of the seas, and a bridge that looked exactly like the golden gate bridge in California. We had some free time when we arrived back to the hotel and decided to go out for a bit. I still needed some gifts! We returned for dinner and spent the rest of the night hanging at the hotel.



Sunday, January 15th, 2006



Today we did a lot of touring of the small cities around Lisbon. We visited many places rich in history. One stop included the western-most part of Europe. Here, we were closer to the United States than we had ever been! We snapped a few pictures and took in the amazing view. It was amazing to see the rich blue water washing against the rocks. We then traveled to Sintra. It was here that the Portuguese royal family had two summer homes. We got the chance to tour one. It was amazing! The furniture pieces were even originals to the palace. The building was in great shape for its age. We finished the tour and headed back to the hotel. A group of us decided to go to the Hard Rock Café for dinner. It was great to feel like we were back in the United States. Our waitress was wonderful and the food was so good. Brandon from Maine even danced with the waitress. We caught a taxicab back to the hotel. A group of us walked down to the local grocery store to get some snacks. It was then time for bed!



Monday, January 16th, 2006

The day started out as usual with breakfast. We finished up and boarded the bus for our first and only visit for the day, a Portuguese School of Agriculture. We arrived at the academy to see students riding horses. This school is a college having 50 professors and nearly 700 students. We first met with the superintendent of the school, who accompanied us throughout the tour. We met Antonio, a veterinarian and a professor of meat technology. He took us through the facility where students were working on their projects. We then moved to the wine education center, which ranks very high in Europe. They produce 60, 000 liters of wine per year. We were able to tour the facility. Our guide, one of the teachers there, told us of a special section of the winery. He was the only one who holds the key. We were given the chance to visit his vintage wine collection. He even had one dating back to 1940! Our next stop was the microbiology lab. We were able to tour the facility where they were doing research on Olive Trees. A piece of twig is placed in a solutions, moved to a hydroponics growing apparatus, and then moved to a media to fully germinated and mature. Once this is completed, they move the plants to a nursery. That was



the last part of our visit. The last thing to do was return to the hotel. When we returned, we had the rest of the afternoon on our own. A group of us went to a local pizzeria, where I had the most amazing calzone. It was that good! We did some more shopping and then traveled back to the hotel. I caught up on some much-needed packing. It was then time for our farewell dinner. We thanked Eduardo and Trini for their time and dedication to the International Leadership Seminar for State Officers. They really enjoyed the FFA throw blanket we gave them. Our final treat of the night was the singing of the chaperones. Ms. Johnson and Mr. Bledsoe had created a song for the entire trip. It was hilarious. It's kind of awkward knowing tomorrow you have to leave. I felt I wanted to be home but when you think about it, you really begin to feel sad. You don't want to leave all of the friends that you've made. This is the second or third time I've seen some of these people, but you really get to know a group when you're with them for nearly two weeks. Time for bed!



Tuesday, January 17th, 2006

Bright and early this morning! We had our room wake up call at 6:30 so that we could be at the airport by 8:00. We had our buffet breakfast and got into our groups for role call and passport checks. We loaded the bus and got the chance to listen to Eduardo's facts for the final time. We arrived at Lisbon airport to board our flight Newark International Airport. After going through numerous lines of security, we boarded our flight back to the United States of America. We were in the air for 7 hours and 16 minutes! Flying back made me realize something, what this trip has taught me. Our world is a small world, as it was coined by Walt Disney, in this modern society. We are so different, yet so much the same. It makes me realize and appreciate American Agriculture and what we have in the United States. This trip also strengthened my respect for those individuals who immigrate to the United States and know little or no English. I've never known the feeling of not understanding or not being understood due to a language barrier. It's not something you can truly understand unless you've been in the situation. Lastly, being away from my friends and family has made me realize the importance of these people. We never think about these things until we're away from them for a long period of time. I encourage all of New Jersey's FFA members to cherish those things and be proud of what you have in the United States. Best of all; be proud that you have the opportunity to be in such a wonderful organization, the FFA. Well, for the last time, over and out!



Only the traveling is good which reveals to me the value of home and enables me to enjoy it better.

~ Henry David Thoreau